

NEWS RELEASE



*Office of the United States Attorney
Western District of Louisiana*

DONALD W. WASHINGTON
United States Attorney

United States Courthouse • 300 Fannin Street, Suite 3201 • Shreveport, Louisiana 71101-3068 • (318) 676-3600
United States Courthouse • 800 Lafayette Street, Suite 2200 • Lafayette, Louisiana 70501-7206 • (337) 262-6618

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Contact: Donald W. Washington (337-262-6618)

William J. Flanagan (318-676-3600)

LAFAYETTE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEMA FRAUD

Defendant used FEMA funds to purchase illegal narcotics

LAFAYETTE, LOUISIANA . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced today that KEITH WAYNE THERIOT, age 25, from Lafayette, Louisiana pled guilty last week before United States District Judge Rebecca Doherty to making a false claim.

THERIOT filed a claim with FEMA following Hurricane Rita which devastated Louisiana's Gulf Coast. In his claim, THERIOT reported that he was the resident and owner of a dwelling on 120 St. Pascal Road in Lafayette. He reported damage to the residence and personal property. As a result of THERIOT's claim, FEMA issued a \$2,000 check to THERIOT.

Investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) revealed that there is no residence located at 120 St. Pascal Road. During interviews, THERIOT admitted that he never resided at the Pascal Road location and that he filed a false claim with FEMA. During the plea hearing, THERIOT admitted that he

used the money to buy oxycontin.

Sentencing will be scheduled for a later date to be determined by the Court. When sentenced, THERIOT faces up to five years federal imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, and supervised release of no more than three years.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kelly Uebinger.

To date, the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Louisiana has charged 52 defendants with violations related to FEMA relief funds, and approximately 55 FEMA fraud investigations are currently on-going in the Western District of Louisiana.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force - chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division - includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the postal Inspector's Office, and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, among others.

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